

Sheffield: Where we are, and where we're headed

Sheffield now

Rural landscape. The aerial photo interpretation of land use map shows in 1999:

- 60% forest
- 22% pasture/cropland/orchard
- 6.5% residential
- 0.5% commercial/industrial

“New England” pattern of villages and outlying rural areas. The population distribution map shows:

- Villages of Sheffield Center and Ashley Falls
- Some pockets appearing in outlying places

Largely rural road system, with good regional access.

- Arterial Route 7 = 8.4 miles
- Major Collectors 7A & 41 = 9.0 miles
- Minor Collectors [Town-maintained]
 - Paved = 83.1 miles
 - Oil & stone = 10.3 miles
 - Dirt = 24.3 miles
 - Sidewalk = 2,278 feet, all in Sheffield Center

Residential tax base. “Trends in Valuation” chart⁷ FY04 shows:

- 87.0% residential & rising
- 8.5 % commercial & falling
- 2.0% industrial and falling

Combination of primary and second homes, predominantly single family.

Assessor records⁸ show:

• Total housing units	1,512
• [Total 1,477 primarily residential structures]	
• Single family: primary home	1,042
• Single family: second home	201
• Separate houses on same lot [total 26 lots]	54
• Mobile homes [24 primary, 1 second home]	25
• 2-family homes [32 structures]	64
• 3-family homes [5 structures]	15
• 4-8 unit homes [6 structures]	29
• Mixed use, primarily residential	82

Expensive to move here. Median assessed values for newly constructed homes:

• Primary homes	\$213,600
• Second homes	\$522,000

⁷ See preceding chart.

⁸ Many thanks to Tammy Blackwell of the Assessor’s office for data; any errors in interpretation are the consultant’s

Town Census of persons claiming residency⁹

1991	2,965	
2000	3,531	
2004	3,385	(incomplete #)

Student population declining, although assessment isn't

- 0.135 students per primary residence bedroom
- Other towns' numbers declining more than Sheffield's
- Capacity in schools sufficient for years ahead

"Developed looking" land vs. parcel size per residential structure.

1999 aerial photo & Assessor counts indicate:

- 1.3 acres "developed" land per residential structure [just over 2,000 acres]

Business base has rural pattern

- Agriculture & at-home businesses in outlying area
- Service & tourist-oriented in Sheffield Center
- New construction/conversion for business near magnet of Great Barrington
[Northern section of Route 7 and Kellogg Road]
- Other than Town and Regional School, one major employer [Sheffield Plastics]
- Sheffield Business Park empty [no utilities, 4 acre minimum lot size]

Sheffield Water Company serves area around Sheffield Center¹⁰

- Maximum production under current permits and current pumps= 340,128 gallons per day ["gpd"]
- More water resources in ground; limitations are capacity of pumps and distribution system
- Depth of wells implies a contained, subsurface source aquifer [as opposed to a surface aquifer that could be the source of shallow residential wells]. Implies less vulnerable to leach fields, other pollutants
- 460 – 470 customers: 80% h/h, 10% Sheffield Plastics, 10% agriculture/businesses/Town

⁹ Thanks to Town Clerk Felecie Joyce & Registrar Pat Sadera for these numbers

¹⁰ Thanks to Dana Bartholomew for interview & sharing 2003 Tighe & Bond study

Regional School's Septic System not able to provide service off-site without large investment in new or expanded system¹¹

- Is a large septic system, not “sewerage treatment plant”
- Permitted capacity of 31,000 gpd only for rare, emergency surge. If regular flow begins to approach 20,000, would trigger requirement for upgrade
- Trying to stay below 10,00 gpd to lessen monitoring, reporting burdens

The Direction We Are Heading

Residential

- No new 2-family, 3-family, or multi-family constructed since 1991
Assume existing are all primary residences?
Some converted to single family second home, see below
- Mobile homes no longer allowed
- 2 additional homes on same lot constructed during the 1990s
Assume 1 every 3 years?
Assume second homes?
- Average 17 single-family primary homes/year 1992 – 2001 [36 between 2002-2003]
Median lot size: 2.02 acres
- Of “new” second homes, majority are conversions of primary homes rather than new construction, i.e. “gut and renovate”, keeping the exterior shell
Median lot size for newly constructed: 9 acres
Consultant does not have numbers on which to project shifts from primary to second home, nor for shift from 2-, 3-, or multi-family to S/F second
- While frontage “ANR” construction predominates, starting to see subdivisions

Business

- Don't have numbers on which to base projections of:
 - Conversion of residential structure to accessory business or all-business
 - Additional business square footage from construction of new buildings or additions to existing buildings

After review and consideration of these land use trends, the June 10, 2004, gathering of Town officials and other community leaders confirmed the following working assumptions for projecting alternative future scenarios.

Summary of Assumptions for Scenarios

¹¹ Thanks to Fred Finkle, Sanitary Technician, for interview

Scenario #1: Continue on current path

1. 17 newly constructed primary homes/year
2. 2 newly constructed second home/year [total 20 new over 10 years]
3. 2nd home on same lot: proportion of primary/second same as other single family; and all newly constructed are primary homes; 1 newly constructed every 3 years
4. No new mobile homes, 2-family, 3-family, multi-family
5. 1 new mixed use primarily residential every 3 years
6. No significant new construction for business

Scenario #1A: Current path but “hotter” market

1. 20 newly constructed primary homes/year
2. Total 25 newly constructed second homes over 10 years
3. 2nd home on same lot: proportion of primary/second same as other single family; and all newly constructed are primary homes; 1 newly constructed every 2 years
4. No new mobile homes, 2-family, 3-family, multi-family
5. 1 new mixed use primarily residential every 2 years
6. No significant new construction for business

Scenario #2: “Hotter” market, but some guided toward desired land use pattern

1. Cluster 1/3 of new primary homes [60], each on own .75 acre lot, and shift 20 S/F primary homes to a Village or Neighborhood Center, each on own .5 acre lot.
 - Reduces newly owned acres by 106
 - Reduces “developed looking” acres by 42
2. Cluster or shared driveway 1/3 [8] of new second homes, each on own 2 acre lot
3. Add 60 bedrooms in Village or Neighborhood Center, in 10 two-family, 2 three-family, & 1 four-family
4. Add 5 new businesses, each on 1.5 acre lot, averaging 1,500 s.f. floor space

Implications of the Alternative Scenarios

Many assumptions go into each of the numbers on which projections are based. Over time Sheffield may gather more refined data and be able to insert better, updated numbers. Still, the patterns of fiscal landscape, and community impact will remain the same:

- Second homes will have higher valuation and fewer school children than primary homes.
- Smaller homes with fewer bedrooms will have fewer school children than the typical single-family home.
- Sheffield is unlikely to see enough expansion of business real estate valuations to have a large impact on the tax base.
- The landscape impact of development [where it is and what it looks like], and its impact on community life [shifting from a small town to a wealthy resort suburb] will change the character of the community more than the actual number of new buildings.

5. Conceptual Land Use Plan: Guiding Growth and Changes To Where They Fit Best

The town-wide *Enhanced Buildout* map presented earlier in this section gives the most accurate picture that available information can paint regarding where the land can best sustain new construction. This map indicates that the community's desire to focus new homes, businesses, and civic activities in village centers is a logical concept that correlates with Sheffield's New England base of soils, water resources, and topography.

The southeast corner of town contains a concentration of relatively flat, dry, buildable lands. At the same time, though, townspeople are used to thinking of Sheffield Center as the principal village center in town. How much potential does the Center have to accommodate additional development?

The following two maps are based upon the town-wide Enhanced Buildout Map, and take a closer look at Sheffield Center and the Ashley Falls/Clayton Neighborhood areas from the perspective of what's there now, and what remaining development capacity each area may have. Participants in both the June 10, 2004, workshop of Town officials and other Community leaders, and the June 18, 2004 community-wide meeting agreed that:

1. There appears to be potential for careful infill and expansion in these two key parts of town.
2. The next step is for residents, property owners, and business owners to be involved creating detailed Village Center and Neighborhood plans.
3. There will be the need for investment in services & amenities in order to sustain future development in these important parts of Sheffield.

□ *Please see Map # 18:
‘Town of Sheffield
Sheffield Center Area Buildable Land’,
Map # 19:
‘Town of Sheffield
Clayton Area Buildable Land’
and
Map # 21:
‘Town of Sheffield
Conceptual Land Use’
behind the MAPS tab.*

The *Conceptual Land Use Plan* (Map #21) shows on a map how the community’s vision of Sheffield’s future will rest on the landscape. There are many studies, much careful consideration and planning, and difficult challenges lying ahead on the way to achieving this vision. Nevertheless more than 120 townspeople at the June 18, 2004, community-wide session unanimously endorsed this conceptual plan as heading in the right direction for Sheffield.

Land Use Action Plan

Overall Goal

Sheffield absorbs new development in a manner that maintains the traditional New England pattern of vibrant village centers surrounded by scenic, sustainable rural resource areas.

Land Use Objectives

1. Foster vibrant village centers and neighborhoods with careful infill and contained expansion.
2. Ensure that when development occurs in agricultural and natural resource areas it is in ways that are least intrusive and avoid the most sensitive and valuable resources.
3. Greet motorists along Routes 7, 7A, and 41 with scenic views and carefully sited development.
4. Maintain the scenic appearance of ridgelines and upper slopes.

Recommendation 1: Work with residents, business owners and other property owners in Sheffield Center and in the Ashley Falls area to draft Village Center Plans that:

- a. Foster a vibrant mix of residential, business & civic uses.
- b. Seek thoughtful infill and limited expansion for desired housing options, retail and services.
- c. Evaluates water, sewer and other improvements needed to support desired village character and density.

Recommendation 2: Work with residents and property owners in the Clayton area to draft a Neighborhood Enhancement plan that:

- a. Foster a vibrant mix of residential & civic uses.

- b. Seek thoughtful infill and limited expansion for desired housing options.
- c. Evaluates water, sewer and other improvements needed to support desired neighborhood character and density.

Recommendation 3: Consulting with residents and property owners, agree on and carry out a coordinated set of voluntary, administrative and regulatory strategies for agricultural and natural resource areas that:

- a. Protect all natural resources.
- b. Minimize loss of farmland and orchards and encourage family farms.
- c. Minimize fragmentation of wildlife habitat.
- d. Absorb new homes in ways that have minimal impacts.
- e. Continue tradition of home-based business with little impact on neighbors & natural resources.
- f. Encourage preservation/reuse of historic structures.

Recommendation 4: Begin community-wide consideration of potential regulations that would:

- a. Avoid construction along ridges.
- b. Minimize clearing of trees and vegetation on upper slopes.

Recommendation 5: Working with residents, business owners and property owners, consider a coordinated set of voluntary and regulatory strategies along the Routes 7 and 7A Corridor that:

- a. Group roadside businesses to maintain scenic views between them.

- b. Apply site plan standards for attractive development and minimize curb cuts.
- c. Implement ‘traffic calming’ measures in Village Centers to slow traffic.
- d. Encourage motorists to stop and visit business and cultural offerings.

Recommendation 6: Working with residents, business owners and property owners, consider a coordinated set of voluntary and regulatory strategies along Route 41 that:

- a. Maintain rural and roadside character.
- b. Minimize impact of development on natural and scenic resources.